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# TWO DEATHS IN THE BRONX

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*In Preparation*

AT THE BAR

# Two Deaths In the Bronx

*By*

DONALD EVANS

PHILADELPHIA
NICHOLAS L. BROWN
MCMXVI

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To:

*Michael Bennett: Pitts Sanborn: Edwin A. Robinson: Marie A.: C. Pierie Garde: Jane Haven: Gilbert Seldes: Helen Henderson: Bushnell Dimond: Elvira Andreani: Layton Crippen: Carl Van Vechten: William R. Murphy:* THE REVEREND *Herbert Throgmorton: Endicott Rich: C. Howard Bonte: Robert P. Lowry: Kenneth Macgowan: Arthur D. Ficke: H. T. Craven: A. Gilbert Clarke: Howard Shelley: Steve Talbot: Owen O'Caedth.*

## TWO DEATHS IN THE BRONX

THE sodden stretches of the months of pregnancy
Had had but one green orchid;
That was their sole pauseful
And suspended moment of beauty.
He had brought it home to her at dawn
On the day before Christmas,
And he was a little drunken as he dropped it on her bed.
But it was a green orchid,
And pleased she took it unquestioningly.
He had bought it with many more
Hours and hours earlier for the girl,
Who was then amusing him.
In some way it had got into his pocket—
Or, perhaps, it was his buttonhole.
He had noticed it as he entered the abode of maternity,
And with his quick sense of values
He offered it in a tenderness.
He would have sent her orchids every day,
But he had no money to spare. He must live.

He was spending the nine months with her—
He had promised to do that—to take care of her
Until their child was born—
Then she would go away with the child.
She was grateful, and, in a way, content.
He had taken an apartment for her far from Broadway,
And sooner or later every night he came home to her.
In the morning she took him his breakfast first,
Then gave him a cigarette, and made his telephone calls—

There was always one, at least,
To arrange for a luncheon or tea hour,
For, continuously, he was deeply in love.
He told her all his secrets,
And by the eighth month she had come in her daily talks
To call three women by their first names.
He had loved each one,
And he still, it appeared, loved the third.
She had lent him all her money,
And he was paying it back during the nine months—
He made her an allowance each week,
And he felt very proud
That he gave her so much of his scant income.
Every fourth week or so he would be held up
On the way home and robbed,
But she got the three weeks' money,
So she was too wise to question or to remember.

Soon there were the doctor and the nurse,
And the last waiting week had arrived.
He was hard to seize then, for he had so many engagements.
There was a hint of a new and lovelier girl.
But she wrote him notes and left them on his bed,
And went about her plans in silence.
She made a cheque out to him for all the money
She had saved and put in the bank,
For she expected to die with her babe,
And she wanted him to take the money and bury her
And the child in the absurd graveyard in the mountains,
Where her adorable drunken father lay.

It was having had such a father
That let her understand him.
She put the cheque
In the bottom of her trunk,
In which were all her theatrical costumes,
And with the cheque she put the biography
She had thought out.
The biography was for the doctor
And his report to the authorities.
She was his sister and she was married—
Her husband was in the West and was detained
From coming to her by imperative business.
Thus she smoothed out to niceness
The troublesome details of the function of birth.

In the last night, with the birth pains
Gripping her, she came to his bedroom,
For he had come home earlier, and her nurse
Was asleep after a tiring day.
She told him of the cheque and her heart's wishes.
He listened tolerantly, and wondered why
It was so fascinating to watch a woman in labour.
She was silent in her agony,
And he rather liked her for that.
Then he fell to speculating on the cheque,
And he asked himself whether there was
Any likelihood that she would die.
It seemed a shame, but it would be
A solution of the problem.
She really wasn't equipped to go on alone
With the handicap of a baby,
And he would give her the serene burial she longed for.

There was four hundred dollars, he learned,
But he would spend every sou of it
For her funeral and the child's.
One could give a flashing party for four hundred dollars,
But that was outside the question—
He was merely the steward of her estate.

Next day he had to leave early—
The delivery, he was told, was still some hours off,
But he would keep in touch by telephone,
And he must hear "Manon";
It had all been arranged for.
It was difficult to telephone,
Yet he did after nightfall—during dinner—
And he turned a trifle pale when he learned
That she had, in truth, died—and the babe with her.
In fact, he felt a bit sick.
There was much to attend to;
He ought to get the cheque at once,
And make the plans for the burial.
He sent for a newspaper to look up an undertaker,
And it chanced that the only advertisement he could find
Was of one who promised adequate disposal
Of the dead for seventy-five dollars.
He could not help it—it was thrust at him;
And the child would only be a trifle more—
At the most one hundred dollars for both,
And then there would be three hundred dollars left
unneeded.
It was sentimental to think about the dead—

What did it matter where one was buried or how?

And he could get the cheque cashed to-night,
And this was the night!
With three hundred dollars he could give a party
That would be memorable,
And he had not done much thus far for her.
She was of a loveliness,
And he was sure he would cease to wander when he got
her.
Death had simplified everything—
It was no use being morose.
He could afford a taxi now
To get uptown quickly for the cheque.
But he would telephone the undertaker first,
Then a half dozen people for guests,
And, last of all, her who had come at the fitting hour
To make his heart glad and at rest.

It was all swiftly done,
And the whir of the motor was grateful music.
He had done cruelly by himself to deny his soul
For all these months the napery of Rector's
And the gold service and the glass.
He loved beauty so!
He remembered it was absinthe
That had made this dear, new woman
Kind to him that first night, so in memory
He ordered absinthe for himself,
While she and his guests drank Pommery.

He knew he had behaved admirably through the long
nine months—
He felt it would give a touch of sterling honesty

To his character, a stupid, basic honesty
He had always so needed.
And he let himself sink away from all the immediate past
That had been so incongruous and impossible.
One way or other the undertaker
Would do all that was necessary—
He needn't even visit the apartment again.

And somehow he knew she would invite him
To go home with her
When they got rid of their guests.
He ordered another absinthe!

## PORTRAIT OF NANCY TREVORS

THEY sat in her drawing-room amid easeful silence
in tolerant enmity.
The men were three, and her husband was the
third.
This in its way amplified his urbanity.
His suavities were of ivory.
He was more irreproachable than her virginal teacups.

She gave her lips to the moment, and her fingers nestled
in a bowl of apricots.
The tea was amber, and the pungent lemon and the
blanched sugar
Seized and caressed the eyes as each man took a proffered
cup.

It loosed the tongues, and the four were free.
As four portraits on a wall come to life they stirred the
silence with a babbling that gleamed.
The drawing-room was draped in a wistaria mist,
And the flutter of the phrases patted the cheek with
an alien charm.
In but a short while she had become dominant,
And then she wrapped herself in the soothing nerves of
excitement.
The three were lost in the pursuit of fragrance.
Their chairs were their kingdoms, and there were no
other empires.
Archly then her voice dared:
"Will you have another cup, my beloved?"

It was three cups that rang to her, and her husband's, it
chanced, was the third.
She smiled over her adroit and ample confession, and it
was enough.
She had done with the hour,
And she let the uneasy hush turn to a hodden-grey.

## DINNER AT THE HOTEL DE LA TIGRESSE VERTE

### I. TERRACE

AS they sat sipping their glasses in the courtyard
Of the Hotel de la Tigresse Verte,
With their silk-swathed ankles softly kissing,
They were certain that they had forever
Imprisoned fickleness in the vodka—
They knew they had found the ultimate pulse of love.

Story upon story, the dark windows whispered down
To them from above, and over the roof's edge
Danced a grey moon.

The woman pressed her chicken-skin fan against her breast
And through her ran trepidant mutinies of desire
With treacheries of emotion. Her voice vapoured:
"In which room shall it be to-night, darling?"
His eyes swept the broad facade, the windows,
Tier upon tier, and his lips were regnant:
"In every room, my beloved!"

## II. LOYALTY

I AM kissing your wayward feet—
The rumours of flight are broken,
Your hands are a dear pale token.
I adore you to touch me, sweet,
And now are the frail vows spoken.

It is bravely the words are said,
Faith is a flash on our faces—
We mock as the mummer traces
The dawn when the month is dead,
Loyalty mussed like your laces.

## DELIRIA
## I. TWO MODERN LOVERS

THE lovers seek the boudoir—
Awkward and amorous,
Excited but emotionless,
And over them hover
Desolate ardours.

## II. MASSED SCREAMS

ANGULAR arrogance
In the urge of rage
Scratching the infinite
For a relief
In the impotence
Of unbelief!

## MARISE KISSING HER SHOULDERS

IT is Easter morning,
And my beloved, with a quaint belated zeal,
Has fled the city
To hunt for the Garden of Gethsemane.

I woke an hour since,
And sat up in my bed,
Which last year I had the artisans
And drapers fashion as a water-lily.
The pillows are in green chenille,
And the sheets are great wisps of olive satin,
Then comes a warmth of velvet ivy
To crush the cold,
And beneath everything
I lie in cream white.

I sat up the hour since,
And mused for a moment
On the ashes in my hearth,
Wishing they were mauve instead of grey—
Death in mauve would be so much nicer—
And then I performed my usual morning office—
The kissing of shoulders!

I was generous this morning—
I kissed the right shoulder first,
Although I am secretly in love
With the left.
Then it was that I realized
The beloved was seeking

The Garden of Gethsemane,
And I was alone.

I must have a companionless day,
A waste, lonely day indoors,
For manifestly I could not venture forth
Into Fifth Avenue alone.
To-day it would be unpleasantly disturbed
With clerks and sempstresses—
To remind one of one's bills—
And well-to-do vulgar folk,
The women frantically eager
To flaunt their bad taste in dress.

I love Fifth Avenue,
But I am a cat,
And so to-day I could not endure
The alien contacts
At my elbow of the crowds that pass.
Obviously, then, I must remain within.

At first I seemed to have no resources,
But I looked at my bed,
And adored it,
And my wounded self-esteem was soothed.

I bade the discords
Of awkward solitariness
A curt farewell.

It came to me that it was imperative
That I should spend the day

Free of the slavery of thinking.
I have never been forced to think—
It is my ever-living pulsing fear
That I may be brought to it some day.
But how not to think?
How not to spoil the epigram—
*She was born to be,*
*Not to think?*

In a caressing whisper
The Avenue unrolled—
I found the marriage of the hours!

For I would write a book,
And furiously scrivening
With the minutes flying past
I should not be degraded to thought;
I should be writing;
Which is a refuge from cerebration.
And I was so joyous
That I bared my shoulders
For a second time,
And kissed them.

This time I was self-indulgent, and approached,
Reverently, the left shoulder first!

## ONE OF THE MAJOR SAINTS

HE had for years been denuding himself of facts;
He lived in the heart of the city, but he eluded
The present as easily as he pushed back the past,
And the future meant for him
Only the monumental painting he had projected.
He had triumphed over his own intellect, and had
Carried himself back to the state of Adam.

One day I visited him and found
Him hard at work with his brushes;
He no longer conversed with one,
So he grunted me greeting not stopping his labour.

I was interested just then in the Saviour,
His quotidian majesty of poise and sublime sureness of pose;
And I walked back and forth in the studio,
Reviewing enthusiastically
The superb efficiency of the Man of Galilee.
I forgot for an instant how close to the first womb
My friend had returned, and suddenly burst forth:
"Was not Jesus Christ the bigger man because
After all He knew He was a faker?"
And the painter turned, annoyed at my interrupting him;
"But who was Jesus Christ?"

His picture is a masterpiece—
It is called "Humanity."

## FOR THE HAUNTING OF MAUNA
## I. BODY OF THE QUEEN

SUAVE body of the Queen, she gave me you,
Misting in still, warm rains of tenderness—
But kept herself, and we are each betrayed.
You are her mistress, and she makes of me
Another mistress! Playthings are we both,
When we thought she meant us for full sovereignty;
It was not regal, and her throne is stained.
She bade you seek me, and your singing feet
Ran quickly, surely; you held out your hands.
You had no fear because you felt my heart
Leap as you laid your white breast under it.
We had no prides to conquer as we kissed,
For we knew kinship in our overthrow.
Yet now she stands apart and questions us.
How can she question—leave me out of it—
But you, her body, her sweet source of joy,—
How can she then divide herself from you,
And calmly reckon what the gain may be?
The hour will come when she will tire of us,
And all your softness will be broken up,
Your rioting lips chilled with an ashen wind.
There is a hint of vileness in the air,
And on the strings a dance of ironies,
With love's scarecrow jigging wearily. . .
Still I have you—so I am not afraid!

## II. VALLEY OF DESIRE

YOUR hat was of an angle, and the veil
Was impudent with seven maddening spots—
With the mouth left free to drink the cool sunlight,
That amber-laden swept the afternoon.
Your gown caressed you, and your level gaze
Fed on the greenness of the cleansing Spring—
Peacocks and yew trees mirrored from your eyes.

I walked beside you, and my hands were glad—
They ran the lines that weave your body-spell.

"Why not to-night?" I asked, and then you smiled,
Half-flattered by my wish, but with wide wings
You gave unyielding answer, "You forget
You had my lips only four days ago;
We wait two more." And there was in your tone
Urbanity that showed a steady pulse.
I was not rebuked—you paid acknowledgment
For the fluttered voice that broke with stressed desire;
Still, this was no hour for the faggot-fire.
Miracle woman, you were far astray—
Your mouth is wine, and all your tender flesh
An easeful meadow for my weariness,
But it was not flame I asked for. It was talk,
The winding minutes of great friendliness,
And the immense companioning of you,
Keen, vivid, rich, warming, and wholly sweet.
I have waited twenty years to talk to you,
And all that empty time I have searched for you.

Now that I have found you shall I wait six days,
And fill the interval with other things?
There is nothing else—the world's dropped away.

For twenty years I have slept upon your breast—
You did not know me, but you felt me there!

## THE MOTHER OF GOD: ACUTE ALCOHOLISM

THERE was a snake in the gutter—
She was positive of that.
It had shown its head twice until the snow had forced it back—
When it snowed it was good for begging, too;
But the wind to-night was too freezing—
It hurried people along.
She could see the money lumps on a dozen girls' legs—
What need had they for money?—
And she had but one dime
That felt bad for the hour's intoning:
"Help a poor old woman who's starving,
For the sake of Mary, the Mother of God."

The snake could not reach her while it kept on snowing,
Yet the snow might stop.
She ought to be away,
But the bad dime didn't help much.
Why wouldn't people listen?
Her left hand was numb, but she couldn't put it
Between the newspapers wrapped around her
Under her cloak,
For there was the frozen carnation
That had to be dangled
Before the eyes of passersby
If the quarters were ever to come in.
The carnation was now three days old,
And of a mustard shade,
For saloon dust discolours.
But yesterday it had brought her a half dollar at noon—

It was not to be discarded.
She wished she knew whether snakes feared carnations.
If it had a longer stem she might get
Her hand inside the cloak
And let the flower show outside—
But a man must have worn it in his buttonhole,
And she was afraid to stick it in the cloak's fold,
Lest the wind blow it away.
There wouldn't be many more people now
Until the theatres were out.
It was a bad stand, anyway—
Why had she come here?
The lights were too bright.
Here was someone opening a purse. She droned:
"Help a poor woman, for the Mother of God."

It was no more than a dime,
But it was a good one this time—
Two more, and she could leave the snake
There in the gutter.
Maybe she could pass the bad coin between the good ones.
Then the theatres would be out.
She was glad there weren't many people passing—
She was tired of approaching them;
They never heard all she said,
There was no use of her making any sound.
If she could only sit down comfortable and warm
In a chair, and hold her hand out—
Then she could bury her head in her cloak,
And she wouldn't see the gutter,
And the snake couldn't see her.
There would be dozing, and when the midnight came

She would count the coins,
A lot of dimes and some quarters,
And there wouldn't be anything more to think about,
And she could throw away the carnation.

Here was a crowd again—
The theatres were letting out earlier and earlier,
And it was not snowing as hard.
She wondered if the snake knew that?
She had to speak again; it was her last chance,
For everybody was hurrying by; they always hurried—
And then there would be nobody.
She needed both her hands,
For there were coatsleeves to be touched.
But she mustn't lose the carnation until she knew
Whether the morrow demanded it.
There was only her hair—she might stick the dirty flower in it,
And then she was free to fight the snake.
It was the best hour,
But she had always made a mistake.
People never heard all she said,
And, besides, they gave too little.
She must speak quickly—her throat burned,
But words must come. A few would answer.
Dimes weren't worth many. Anything would do:
"Please help—the Mother of God."

## MARY DOUGLAS BRUITING THE BEAUTY OF THE HANDS OF MONSIEUR Y.

MONSIEUR Y., the artist, has haunting hands—
Fingers that are unforgetable.
I have sat for arrested spaces,
Pondering the influence of their inhibitions—
Gazing at a battlefield where emotions
Had been in tragic conflict.
The hands are to the first glance decently formed,
But they awaken curiosity rather than admiration,
For the essence of their exquisiteness
Is not quickly to be felt.
Their beauty is draped—as all enduring beauty
Must be—with indifference.

Monsieur Y. has always been indulgent to me.
His studio I seek as an asylum
From the wolves—my dear friends.
He says he is not my friend,
And for the whim I have believed it.
One November afternoon when I knew he would be
Heartily engrossed on his new canvas,
And I was chilled with Broadway's ineptitudes,
I sought his presence.
It was even a chillier welcome I received,
But there is sometimes a flame in frigidity
That gives the longed-for social shock.

He lit the lamp for the tea kettle,
And went back to work,
Leaving me to the half-shadowed intimacies of housewifery.

The tea service is simply done,
So I was soon free to regard him,
And his brusqueness stirred me to protest.
I parried first—for I am not stupid—
And asked whether he thought
It was a strain of pity for the fallen Madonnas
He painted so admirably that had given his hands
An immaculate augustness that was smoothed away
Into a catholic simplicity.
That was grandiose, but it won a rejoinder.
I had not whispered of the spirituality,
But it was that he offered me.
I had seized the nuance.
"You have an insistent way," he said,
"But insistence has its boundaries.
Yet you are a mirror, and a mirror
Is sometimes a solution.
It glimmers back one's futility.
I like my hands more than you do,
For they are the symbols
Of the only triumph I shall ever know.
They are the trophies of my conquering.
A long time ago I was absorbed with love for a woman,
Who was merely touched with fragrant pleasure
Because I worshipped her.
She, too, was in love, but not with me.
We met often,
And spent long hours together and alone,
When only the sheerest intervals separated us.
We luncheoned, we dined, we theatred together.
We walked and talked. And we tea-cupped.
She gave me of the sight of her loveliness

In abundant generosity because I adored her.
And all the time I had my hands. All the hours
I was at her side they ached to touch,
To move over her—not to grasp in bestial, imperative fashion,
But to finger, to question the softness of her flesh,
To sing as they crept over her,
To give the quick, wild quivers of possession.
But because of the pride of the saffron highway
I never touched her;
I held back through all the evasions of our communion.
She came to like me very much, though I never
Thrilled her to a fine surrender.
But it has worked its way out—
For she was brought to realize
That because I did not make a false tempo
With the hungry hands there was homage to be paid them.
Now, I think it is really time for you to go.

There was the secret of his perfect hands—
They were still full of yearning blood.
All his desire had leaped out into them,
And it remained there—
The hands were two lovers, vainly waiting for their hour.

## AMBERGRIS
## I. STARS OF PARIS—IN APRIL OF A THURSDAY IN THE MORNING

WE have lain
Breast to breast,
Brain to brain.
For the rest
All is vain—
Mixed with pain.
Unconfessed
Is our stain.
Naught is plain
Save the chain—
So again
Ends the quest—
Fibre-fain,
Breast to breast,
Brain to brain.
Joy is best—
Stars again
In the rain!

## II. UNE NUIT BLANCHE

AND, Daughter of the Moon, this interlude
Snows the sweet pastures in between your breasts.
Cold from the sea I rise, and vaguely brood
With all desire far off, and we are guests
In upland meadows where the silence rests.

You are lost to me for love wantonness,
But now I touch your girlhood's wraith in flight,
Retrace the years you were companionless,
For as I kiss your mouth you make the night
Quiet and virginal and green and white.

## ROUGE FOR VIRGINS
## I. THE EGOIST

BEYOND doubt he was an egoist,
At every angle, in every breath;
But he was always seeking a woman
With whom he could abandon it,
Cast it away for a blended unity
That would yield a rich, absorbed
And impersonal common personality.

## II. ADOLPHE

HE was of a scant passion at that odd hour,
But he caught the smooth content
Of the question spread out before him—
It roused him to barbaric acknowledgment:
"I have no quarrel with virginity,
Though many have called it cold,
And others have found it barren,
For, after all, it can be raped!"
There was his voice that crept out
Hungrily in hunt for a fresh immaculate.
His was not lubricity.
He had merely resisted
The enervating influence
Of the untold centuries of civilization.

## GROTESQUES

### I. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BOTTLE

AS my chin pressed against the arm
Of the amiable Hildegarde
I was brought to realize
That I had neglected to shave,
And as I knew that I should not take full pleasure
At dawn in the ceremony of the bath
If bristles were on my face
I determined that I would go forth
In search of a barber, a whimsical barber,
For surely he must be a whimsical coiffeur,
To have his shop open as late as four o'clock.

The Hildegarde did not wake as I dressed,
But she smiled me good fortune on my adventure.

When I reached the street
I decided I would go
In the direction the wind was blowing,
And so it was to the East I went.
Soon I came upon stairs that seemed
To lead down a great way,
And the entrance portal was lighted,
And convinced I said:
"Here will I descend. It must take me to my barber."

Flight after flight I wound down,
And the lights increased in number,
I was almost forgetting my errand in my excitement,
When suddenly I saw a sign,—"Barber Shop de Luxe"

Over the door of a still more brilliantly lighted room.
Many barbers and many patrons I noticed as I entered,
And I vowed I would never patronize any other establishment.
But as I glanced about I could see no chairs.
Everything else was there—but no chairs.
Then an attendant came up to me, "Shave, sir?"
"Yes, but where?" I replied, "there are no chairs."
"Ah, they are not needed," he explained. "Just look."
I followed his finger, and beheld a client,
Who had entered just ahead of me.
He had removed his cravat and collar,
And his barber had given him a razor.
With a detached nonchalance
He deftly cut off his own head,
And gravely handed it to the barber,
Who quickly lathered the face and began his ministrations.
Then I perceived the other barbers
Were all busied in the same way,
While the decapitated leaned against the walls
Leisurely waiting
The return of their heads.

A barber finished—hot towel, cold cream, massage, perfume,
And with the head, the hair immaculately brushed
And moustache waxed,
On a silver tray,
He smilingly passed it back to its owner,
Who placed it on his neck with both hands,

Nodding thanks, while he dropped silver
In the barber's palm.

It was my turn and my collar was off.
I held a razor, and it all seemed
Much the better way to be shaved.
I raised the blade to my throat, but then I stayed my hand,
For at my feet I saw a great pool of blood.
"Why is that?" I asked the barber.
He showed a little shrug:
"It was nothing. A customer was careless.
He put his head on insecurely,
And it fell off. It was slightly bruised,
And it did not become him as well
When he put it on again."

"One cannot be too careful
In one's care of one's person," I thought.
"The man has lost much blood.
He will be very pallid to-morrow."
And then I changed my mind about being shaved.
I covenanted with myself:
"I will raise a beard."

## II. HUGH FROTHINGHAM

ON his thirtieth birthday he awoke in a dire mood,
And he was of no heart to grasp at the flying hours
For little minutes of happiness.
He knew he was no longer a boy, and youth being to him
The one true virginal beauty of life,
The knowledge of his own passing
Filled him with unspeakable sadness,
And he felt his soul tainted with staleness.

It was noon when he breakfasted in bed,
And as the servant brought in on the tray
Several packets that had arrived by the post
It aroused no curiosity within him.
In truth, he was as one
Stricken with a mortal malady,
And listlessly he picked up
Even the box that the inscription told him
Came from the woman with the hands of covering flame.

When the box was opened and he saw the gift
There came a slight indrawn breath
Of petulance and hurt protest.
She had sent him a bundle of white collars,
And the mystery of such a choice
Struck him as a cruel heaping on of misery.
"Have I need of collars?" he sighed weakly.
"Why is she so unkind?"

With numbed senses he dragged himself from bed,
And bathed and dressed, feeling angrily
That everything looked drab.
When it came to the selection of neckwear
He reached for the bundle of collars she had sent.
He would wear one, and then descend on her.
He would reproach her for her stupid
And inane jest,
And she would have to listen
To all his spleen against Fate for arranging life
So that his youth should depart.
He would make her day unhappy, too;
That would be her punishment.

He moved toward the mirror to arrange his cravat,
And for the first time in his life
He tasted no pleasurable thrill
As his glance sought for its mirrored twin.
He was old. It was ghastly, grotesque.
He involuntarily shut his eyes as he reached the glass.
He for a moment could not look;
Then with fingers clasping his hips he gazed.
"Is this another torture?" he all but screamed. "It is not I. Where am I?"

He was looking at a boy of twenty-three,
Graceful as a silver poplar.

A gasp swept him to another mirror,
And it gave him the answer.
"Madonna of the white collars," he cried, "you have done it.

"Your gift has given me back my boyhood.
"This is a collar for an innocent lad,
"And it takes away the burden of ten years.
"Why did I not think of it myself?"

Singing he tore from the house,
And made his way,
Choked with ardour,
To the boudoir of the beloved.

## THE BEGGAR

LET us always be prodigal towards beggars,
For they are the sentinels
At the outposts of civilization.
If the mendicants should desert us
We should have no choice
But to surrender to efficiency,
And aristocracy must perish.
From the world would vanish all the soft vices,
Extravagance, frivolousness, greed,
Selfishness, luxury, wastefulness,
And life would grow intolerable
Under the curse "All men are equal."

Let us never pass a beggar without giving,
For just as society would crumble
If the derelicts ceased to waylay us,
So would the soul shrivel,
And none could save his own soul.
The beggars are our saviours, for we give,
And thus make atonement for our sins.

If a man toss a silver piece to a beggar
On his way to the first rendezvous
With his wife's friend
He will not feel remorse for the liaison.
He has been generous to one of God's creatures—
That will absolve him.

If a man throw a gold piece to a beggar
He may be faithless to his mistress,

Or desert his wife.
His gift will excuse all,
And he may stroll along the boulevards
Sustained and nourished
By his own milk of human kindness.

## OUBLIETTES
### I. IRIS

IT was better so
When you did not know—
A short while ago.

You are kind indeed,
And my hungers feed
Since you feel my need.

But I pay in pain
And how very vain
The few hours I gain.

In the old distress
There was little stress
For, companionless,

I would paint the days,
With my heart a phase
Of an ancient phrase.

Now, imperative
For my soul to live
Is the joy you give!

I am torn with fear
You will disappear,
When you are not near.

It was better so
When you did not know—

## II. GREY ROOM

DEAREST,
But not the nearest—
If I call
Will you come
To the dying?
I am lying
Brumal, dumb
By the wall.
Dearest,
But never the nearest
When I fall
Through the gods,
Or the odds.

## III. NIGHT SOUNDS: IN ESTRANGEMENT

THE whole night through
To lie waiting for you
To come down the long corridor to me!
Hints of you, sweet,
A hundred times your feet
Near as the walls and floors move wearily.

Midnight to dawn,
Bringing oblivion,
I taste the night sounds as the stir of you.
Ghosts of a white
Flame lingering in flight
When the torture of the listening is through.

## RICHES AND REVENGE

AMID the pathos of the decay of character
I have found the highroad leading to an income,
And a bland, flaunting, shameless income,
As delicious as a harlot's.
After all, I have not made love in vain,
And the women shall pray—and keep me!
It will give me also the strengthening wine
Of revenge for the stupidities
And inanities and ruined beauty
Of the disappointing daughters of Eve.
I have found all women stupid save Maenad Mauna.
But she had too many characters,
And she got lost in them,
And so I hate her most of all.
Shadowy women, why were you all so stupid?
You were all pretty—and Mauna was exquisite
To the point of ecstasy—
But you broke my heart,
For you could not save me from tiring of you.
And so you must pay the penalty,
And it shall be by providing me with an income.
I have searched for years for an income,
And now I have found it,
It is very simple.

I have every letter ever written to me—
Don't you remember how I read you all the other women's letters?
And I have read all the others
All your letters.

You learned everything about one another,
And each of you thought she alone
Had the secrets.
And the letters—did you not write indiscreetly,
And damningly, and surrenderingly?
And I have all the letters.

I shall offer them to you all for sale—
Each woman may buy back her own letters,
All but Mauna.
Will you buy?
I think so.
If you do not, I shall publish them—
Each collection in a separate volume,
And then you will be lost.
I begin to-morrow having them typewritten,
And the day after my income begins.
I may spend the winter pleasurably in Nice—
I can try my new system at Monte Carlo.
I hold your reputations in my hands,
And you must pay,
Else I shall open my hands, and you will be ruined.
It is useless to balk, to beseech,
You must capitulate.
For those of you who are recalcitrant
I shall have many prods of terror—
And revivifying cruelty will make the days
Glad and exciting for me.

Dear women, you have done well—
Most of you have husbands,
And some of you have children.

You all have speckless names.
Why ever in the world were you so rash
As to write me as you did.

If you try to avoid my levy
I shall send you a copy
Of one of your letters on a day
When you are giving a brave dinner,
With a little printed slip reminding you
Of the volume soon to go to the printer.
Will it not chill your blood?
Will you not pay?

But for you, Maenad Mauna,
I shall have no mercy.
There was no excuse for you—
You were lovely, you were of a brain
Satisfying and many-coloured and winding,
And you ran through the days
Like a perfumed breeze.
You could have charmed me for the whole of life—
I can forgive the others, but not you.
I can forgive the two who married me—
They, at least, divorced me—
But you, like me, let your character go bankrupt,
You were too many women,
And so I lost you.
Your letters shall be published,
And you will lose everything you now hold dear,
For you have become a striking woman,
And scorn will sear you.
Why were you at all—if you were not to remain?

What have you now that shows
With what we might have had together?
There is a reason for every one else,
But none for you.
They were born stupid, and their beauty left them,
But you had magnificent understanding and hunger for joy,
And your beauty only increased
As you ministered to your senses.
The others shall give me an income,
But you will afford me atonement.
When I publish the book of your letters
You will be thrust from your home;
You will become a prostitute.
I know you will die in the gutter—
Perhaps, when I see you there
I shall cease to love you,
For you were the moon that might have saved the stars.

## DOMESTICITIES
## I. THE OPERATION

SHE had passed through the operation successfully
And her husband was sitting at her bedside.
He gazed at her imperious hair
And faintly flushed face,
And where with inviting intimacy her breasts' outline
Came through the sheet full and firm.
She was of an unbelievable softness,
And her eyes seemed filled with affection.

He must go to business, and he rose,
Reluctant to leave her—
Then as he bent over to kiss her
His body throbbed with proud hunger.
He walked down the streets happy as a child
With a bright new toy, saying to himself:
"To-day, to-night, to-morrow, next week,
A month, and she cannot be unfaithful!"

## II. FROM A MEADOW OF GARDENIAS

THE man I most admire of all the world
Moves me also to poignancies of pity.
He has the most distinguished
Of the names of mortals—
It is Ivor Vyvyan.
He married nine years ago,
And Madame Vyvyan is of the loveliness of pearls,
Sheer and shimmering.
Her faithfulness for their honeymoon
Was a tender perfume that escaped,
Yet when they returned to town and she was soon
Giving bare shoulders to a lover
Vyvyan seemed
Not to be caught up by madness.
It was manifest he loved the exquisite Madame Vyvyan,
And he appeared to be almost happy;
He glittered the content
Of a man who had found a pot of gold
At the rainbow's end.

It has been without change for nine years—
Vyvyan still glitters, and it was only
A month ago that I drew him to revealment.
And now I know he is the wisest of human beings.
"She came to me from a meadow of gardenias," he said,
"And her hands were full of miracles—
And the miracles were beauty!
Beauty is the only necessary thing in life,
And she brought it alone to me.
Thus she offered me everything—

I knew her then for the woman of God.
Through the years she has given me nothing but beauty,
And she will remain for several decades
An impeccably perfect woman.
She has had her lovers,
But they do not greatly matter.
They take nothing from her,
For she unfolds and unfolds,
Petal upon petal, waxen, immaculate.
Her beauty is magnificently inexhaustible—
She has no thought but to be beautiful,
And for this she is the noblest of women—
She is the most devoted of wives,
For it is the purest essence of wifeliness,
To spread for me the feast of feasts.
It saves me from a search for beauty,
For one must be fed.
And there is so little beauty in the world!
She brings it me, and only beauty . . . only beauty!"

Vyvyan did not sigh when he had finished—
It was that convinced me.
She was from a meadow of gardenias,
And her hands are full of miracles.
She walks out of the shadows of beauty,
And her preoccupation is infinite.
The lovers, one and the hundredth, count for nothing—
Vyvyan could ask no more.
He has everything!

## III. INFIDELITIES

MY darling, you write me charming letters from your bed,
They caress me, and the darkness covers us,
And your luminous whispers are in my ear.
You call me, and I come to you as I read,
Eager to give you to my hands,
And be lost upon your breast.

But often next day when I re-read a letter I dream,
I wonder, was not your husband, while you wrote it,
In the next room rising from his bath,
And sprinkling rice powder over himself
Making ready to come to you?
Were not perhaps the words you wrote
Your torch to set yourself in flames?
Did not the last echoes
Of your call to your lover
Help to sweep you not too passively
To accustomed clamorous arms?

## IV. THE BERWIND HOWARDS

AS he entered he had the odour
Of the law courts about him,
And so I was not surprised when he said:
"At last, my friend, it is a divorce."

The Berwind Howards' estrangement
Was of several years' standing—
She had been unfaithful
Within a year of their marriage,
But he never reproached her,
And outwardly he continued to live with her.
Sometimes I felt angry with him
Because he ignored the great damning fact,
And thus I deeply rejoiced when he told me
Of his coming freedom.
"Will you be a witness for my wife?" he then asked me.
I did not understand him at first—
"You mean, for yourself?" I interrogated.
"No, no," he replied quickly.
"My wife will bring the suit;
You must testify against me."
I was dumfounded—
His conduct was irreproachable.
Why should she bring action?
Hers was the offending—
And I besought him for an untangling.

"Of course, she is suing me," he answered.
"Not had she a dozen lovers
Could I admit to my soul

That she could betray me.
I have never been able to understand
How a man can accuse his wife,
Confess to the world
That she has found another man
More to her liking than himself.
My pride would not let me—
I have never believed she has been faithless.
I would deny it with my last breath.
She must get the divorce—
My honour demands that the rabble
Think her a stainless woman.
For the Berwind Howards I, not she,
Will do the sinning.

## FRAIL PHRASES

HER hand came through the curtain like a voice—
He had pondered this line in ungestured sadness
As he walked towards the Park,
And he was filled with enamorate pity,
Because of the line's perishability.
He reflected hopelessly that a word's loveliness
May endure but for a decade,
And that only the poets who hew colossally
Out of granite great, uncouth figures
Can live for eternity.
There were tears in his eyes for the frail phrases,
The flairs of beauty that die,
And the bland insinuations of spring angered him
In his valetudinarian passage.

As he crossed the Plaza he stopped to let two hansoms pass,
But they, too, halted, and from the first, the flaps flung suddenly back,
Came a hand and a face!
It was the chatoyant Mrs. Ashleigh Norwood,
The most lyrically woven woman in Philadelphia.

She gave him greeting out of her suave prides,
Her inviolate charm and her renewing beauty,
And he forgot the profaning of the phrases
Under the assonances of her invictive personality.
"Will you ride with me?" she asked, and he,
Pointing to the other hansom abreast hers, parleyed:
"With you, or in that?"

"Oh, with me," sloped her answer,
"The other hansom conveys my emotions—
I carry with me only my powder puff."
Flushed he hung on her pause, and held
The silence, tasting her valorous words;
Then he bade the driver make on, bowing low
As she was drawn out of sight.

The waves crept back, but he knew the sea was coming in;
Some of the straightness went out of his body,
And he prepared for the last surrender.
"Perishable women! Frail phrases!"
Then as he let drop his chin upon his breast
He thought of the long-entombed praise of the printer
When he looked for the first time
On Mrs. Norwood's portrait:
"And she might have killed an Emperor of France."

LIST IN BELLES-LETTRES

## LIST IN BELLES-LETTRES

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